

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 00174 091300Z POSS DUPE
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 SSM-05 ACDA-10 OMB-01 SAJ-01
TRSE-00 /082 W
-----091400Z 117357 /41

O R 091133Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4370
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 0174

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS, US
SUBJECT: JERUSALEM POST EDITORIAL ON U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN ISRAELI
ELECTION

1. UNDER THE TITLE "WHO'S INTERVENING NOW?" THE JERUSALEM POST
PUBLISHED THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL SUNDAY JANUARY 9. BEGIN TEXT:
"THE NEW YORK TIMES" HAS URGED ISRAELI VOTERS TO ELECT A
GOVERNMENT WITH A STRONG MAN-
DATE TO NEGOTIATE THE PROBLEMS OF PEACE AND SECURITY OR RISK AN
IMPOSED SETTLEMENT.

2. SINCE THIS EDITORIAL COMMENT QUITE CLEARLY REFLECTS VIEWS RAMPANT
AMONG STATE DEPARTMENT ARABISTS, IT COMES CLOSE TO INTOLERABLE PARTIS
AN
INTERVENTION IN ISRAEL'S ELECTORAL PROCESS. LAST FALL, THERE WERE
JUSTIFIED SIGNS OF AMERICAN BRIDLING OVER HINTS OF POSSIBLE ISRAELI
INVOLVEMENT IN THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN, ALTHOUGH
SUCH INVOLVEMENT

WAS ACTIVELY SOLICITED BY THE FORD ADMINISTRATION. ISRAEL
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WISELY RESISTED THIS TEMPTATION AND WOULD BE WITHIN ITS RIGHTS IN
SEEKING TO IMPRESS THE NEED FOR SIMILAR RETICENCE AND OBSERVANCE OF
THE PUNCTILIO OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS UPON U.S. OFFICIALS.

3. BUT THE "TIMES" COMMENT ALSO REFLECTS A BASIC INSUNDERSTANDING
OF THE ISRAELI ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PROCESS. THE ISRAELI VOTER
DOES NOT VOTE FOR A GOVERNMENT, BUT FOR PARTY LISTS TO THE KNESSET.

IT IS FROM THESE THAT A COALITION GOVERNMENT IS FASHIONED IN A COMPLEX PROCESS OFTEN BASED ON CONSIDERATIONS DIVORCED FROM THE MAIN ISSUES WHICH FIGURED IN THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. THIS ANOMALY IS SPECIFICALLY ONE OF THE DOMESTIC ISSUES WHICH FIGURE IN THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN, AGAINST WHICH THE "TIMES" COUNSELS. ONE OF THE REALITIES WHICH SEEMS TO BE EMERGING FROM THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION IS THAT THE ISRAELI POLITICAL SYSTEM WILL HAVE TO WEATHER THE PROBABILITY

OF EVEN GREATER ELECTORAL FRAGMENTATION IN THE FIRST STAGE, AFTER THE MAY ELECTIONS, BEFORE IT CAN PROGRESS TO SYSTEMIC REFORM WHICH CAN PROMISE THE ELECTION OF A STRONG GOVERNMENT.

4. PRIMARILY, HOWEVER, THE "TIMES" SHOULD BE TAKEN TO TASK FOR ACCEPTING AND LENDING ITS PRESTIGIOUS VOICE TO THE PROPAGATION OF THE LINE OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT ARABISTS THAT THE MAIN REASON FOR THE ABSENCE OF PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS THAT THE ISRAEL GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TOO WEAK TO RISK PEACE. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. IN THE CASE OF THE ANTI-ISRAEL ELEMENTS IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT THIS LINE IS BASED ON AN INTENTIONAL MISREADING OF THE REALITIES OF THE ARAB-ISRAEL DISPUTE. THAT "THE NEW YORK TIMES" IS GIVING SIGNS OF "BUYING" THIS LINE, IS INDEED CAUSE FOR CONCERN.

5. SURELY IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS THAT THERE HAS FOR LONG BEEN A TACIT AND BROAD ISRAELI CONSENSUS ON THE NEED FOR SIGNIFICANT TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS TO THE ARABS, INCLUDING CONCESSIONS ON THE WEST BANK. THIS CONSENSUS, HOWEVER, CONCEIVES OF SUCH CONCESSIONS ONLY IN RETURN FOR CREDIBLE DECLARATIONS AND TANGIBLE STEPS LEADING TO PEACE ON THE PART OF THE ARABS. IT IS SPECIFICALLY THESE THAT HAVE BEEN ABSENT DESPITE SADAT'S RECENT PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN.
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6. ONLY RELATIVELY SMALL FRINGE GROUPS WITHIN ISRAEL INSIST ON PERMANENT RETENTION OF THE ENTIRE WEST BANK ON RELIGIOUS AND HISTORICAL GROUNDS; THE MAINSTREAM OF ISRAELI OPINION INSISTS ON RETAINING THEM, CONDITIONALLY, FOR INCONTROVERTIBLE SECURITY REASONS. TRANSFORMING THIS TACIT CONSENSUS INTO BROAD PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ACTUALLY NEGOTIATING TERRITORIES FOR PEACE WOULD DEPEND TO A LARGE EXTENT ON AMERICAN READINESS TO APPLY SUASION AND PRESSURE ON "MODERATE" ELEMENTS IN THE ARAB WORLD TO COME OUT WITH CREDIBLE PEACE OVERTURES.

7. CONTINUED ABSENCE OF SUCH AN AMERICAN READINESS WILL ONLY GIVE RISE TO DANGEROUS MISCONCEPTIONS AS TO WHAT MAY BE EXPECTED AFTER ISRAEL'S ELECTIONS. NEARLY ANY CONCEIVABLE GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL EMERGE FROM THOSE ELECTIONS -- WHETHER "WEAK" OR "STRONG" -- WILL IN ALL LIKLIHOOD AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN A NEW ROUND OF GENEVA TALKS. WHETHER SUCH TALKS WILL BE A FUTILE EXERCISE IN PROPAGANDA, AS WAS GENEVA I, OR WHETHER THERE WILL BE A CHANCE FOR SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS TO PEACE WILL DEPEND PRIMARILY ON THE ARAB STANCE.

8. A SUPPOSEDLY "WEAK" ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, SUCCUMBING TO AMERICAN PRESSURE, ACCEPTED THE 1975 SINAI AGREEMENT. THE ISRAELI CONSENSUS ACCEPTED THIS AGREEMENT ENTAILING ONE-SIDED TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS BY ISRAEL BECAUSE THEY WERE MADE FAR FROM ISRAEL'S POPULATION CENTRES AND BECAUSE THEY WERE SWEETENED BY AMERICAN COMMITMENTS TO MAJOR DEFENCE AND ECONOMIC AID. SIMILAR CONCESSIONS IN THE GOLAN AND THE WEST BANK, SITUATED RIGHT IN ISRAEL'S BACK YARD, WILL BE RESISTED BY ANY ISRAEL GOVERNMENT IN THE ABSENCE OF A CREDIBLE ARAB CHANGE OF HEART.

9. SURELY ISRAEL IS ENTITLED TO EXPECT THE SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN CONSENSUS, ON SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE AND SECURITY, IN HER STRIVING FOR A TRUE PEACE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, INTERVENTION, NATIONAL ELECTIONS, ALLEGATIONS, PRESS RELEASES, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 09-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TELAV00174
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770014-0926, D770008-0514
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770168/aaaachls.tel
Line Count: 130
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2700b7db-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28-Sep-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3636389
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: JERUSALEM POST EDITORIAL ON U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN ISRAELI ELECTION
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS, US, JERUSALEM POST
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2700b7db-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009